

HENRY J. HYDE, ILLINOIS
CHAIRMAN

JAMES A. LEACH, IOWA
CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, NEW JERSEY
DAN BURTON, INDIANA
ELTON GALLEGLY, CALIFORNIA
ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, FLORIDA
DANA ROHRBACHER, CALIFORNIA
EDWARD R. ROYCE, CALIFORNIA
PETER T. KING, NEW YORK
STEVEN J. CHABOT, OHIO
THOMAS G. TANCREDI, COLORADO
RON PAUL, TEXAS
DARRELL ISSA, CALIFORNIA
JEFF FLAKE, ARIZONA
JO ANN DAVIS, VIRGINIA
MARK GREEN, WISCONSIN
JERRY WELLER, ILLINOIS
MIKE PENCE, INDIANA
THADDEUS G. MCCOTTER, MICHIGAN
KATHERINE HARRIS, FLORIDA
JOE WILSON, SOUTH CAROLINA
JOHN BOOZMAN, ARKANSAS
J. GRESHAM BARRETT, SOUTH CAROLINA
CONNIE MACK, FLORIDA
JEFF FORTENBERRY, NEBRASKA
MICHAEL MCCAUL, TEXAS
TED POE, TEXAS

THOMAS E. MOONEY
GENERAL COUNSEL

HILLEL WEINBERG
STAFF DIRECTOR

KRISTEN F. GILLEY
DEPUTY STAFF DIRECTOR

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

TELEPHONE: (202) 225-5021

September 19, 2006

TOM LANTOS, CALIFORNIA
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER

HOWARD L. BERMAN, CALIFORNIA
GARY L. ACKERMAN, NEW YORK
ENI F.H. FALLOOMAVAGA, AMERICAN SAMOA
DONALD M. PAYNE, NEW JERSEY
SHERROD BROWN, OHIO
BRAD SHERMAN, CALIFORNIA
ROBERT WEXLER, FLORIDA
ELIOT L. ENGEL, NEW YORK
WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT, MASSACHUSETTS
GREGORY W. MEEKS, NEW YORK
BARBARA LEE, CALIFORNIA
JOSEPH CROWLEY, NEW YORK
EARL BLUMENAUER, OREGON
SHELLEY BERKLEY, NEVADA
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, CALIFORNIA
ADAM B. SCHIFF, CALIFORNIA
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA
ADAM SMITH, WASHINGTON
BETTY MCCOLLUM, MINNESOTA
BEN CHANDLER, KENTUCKY
DENNIS A. CARDÓZA, CALIFORNIA
RUSS CARNAHAN, MISSOURI

ROBERT R. KING
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

PETER M. YEO
DEMOCRATIC DEPUTY STAFF DIRECTOR

DAVID S. ABRAMOWITZ
DEMOCRATIC CHIEF COUNSEL

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The dreams of the Afghan people for peace, security and a better life are drowning in a sea of violence, corruption and opium poppy. There are many causes for this dire circumstance: a central government that is still too weak, too poor, and too riddled with corruption to provide basic services, security, and promote economic opportunity; a resurgent Taliban in the South and East, showing surprising military force and using new techniques reminiscent of those used by Iraqi terrorist groups; and an almost-unimaginable growth in opium cultivation and narcotics riches to bribe officials, enslave poor farmers, and fund the Taliban and other terrorist activities. Indeed, the UN Office of Drug Control and Policy is reporting a nearly 60 percent increase this year in poppy growth from the already record levels of last year.

Mr. President, it is clear that the United States and its coalition partners are simply not doing all that is necessary to prevent Afghanistan from lapsing back into lawlessness and a sanctuary for terrorists.

Your Administration desperately needs to conduct an immediate, bottom-up review of your Afghanistan policies and programs, with a significant increase in funding to match our vital national interest in a secure and democratic Afghanistan. The effort must be overseen by a senior White House official who reports directly to you, and whose sole responsibility will be to lead and coordinate all U.S. activities in Afghanistan.

A crucial aspect of this effort must be a more direct and aggressive fight against the explosive growth in the narcotics trade in Afghanistan, especially in the South. So long as your Administration refuses to go after the narco-traffickers and narco-warlords, we are fighting for our common security with one hand tied behind our backs.

Mr. President, we respectfully urge you to direct our armed forces in Afghanistan, and encourage the forces of NATO, to begin to directly and fully support operations against drug traffickers and narco-warlords immediately throughout Afghanistan, but especially in the southern regions.

Their activities must be stopped, and stopped now. The huge profits from the opium trade are funding the implements of terror for the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and criminal gangs that are preying on the innocent and killing our people, Coalition allies, and Afghan soldiers, officials and civilians. The narco-warlords are making plantations of whole regions, entangling poor farmers in a web of desperation, economic dependency and fear. They are well on their way to creating the world's first true "narco-state", whose economy and politics are almost completely dominated by the drug trade. Imagine the consequences of this country, returning to the control of al-Qaeda and its sympathizers.

The Afghan army, police, and counter-narcotics forces are not yet adequate to the job. We simply cannot wait until they have the human, material, and judicial resources to take on the drug traffickers and narco-warlords. Many of us in Congress have urged that U.S. forces take a more aggressive course of action on counter-narcotics operations by your Administration for years. In response, we have been told that the U.S. did not have adequate forces to go after the narco-traffickers and narco-warlords in addition to combating both the Taliban and al-Qaeda terrorists and insurgents. We have also been told that the United States could not afford to create enemies of the warlords and militias whose help we needed in our fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

With the increase in NATO troops in Afghanistan and the freeing of U.S. forces from static duty in Provincial Reconstruction Teams in the South, now is the time to go after these terrorists and criminals. We recognize that the current combat operations against Taliban fighters are vital, and we urge you to personally intervene with the leaders of NATO member countries to further increase their troop contributions. But U.S. and NATO forces must also assume a counter-drug mission, as we can no longer afford the luxury of pretending that warlords in league with narcotic-traffickers and terrorists are allies in our efforts to secure a free and democratic Afghanistan.

This is one element of a more aggressive counter-narcotics program that of necessity should also include poppy eradication, reconstruction, political development and alternative livelihood programs. These programs must be implemented if there is to be any hope of stopping the wave after wave of violence, corruption and despair swamping Afghanistan. Success in turning back this tide is absolutely vital.

Mr. President, the courageous men and women of the U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan are fighting and dying for a noble cause: the liberation of the people of Afghanistan from the tyranny and barbarism of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and from more than twenty years of civil war. They are also fighting to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a terrorist sanctuary from which future "9/11's" are launched. We must ensure that their valor and their sacrifices are not in vain. We cannot afford to lose Afghanistan again.

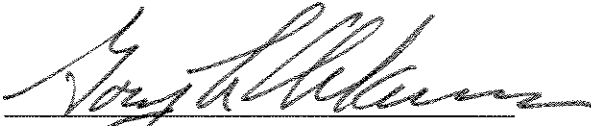
Sincerely,



TOM LANTOS
Ranking Democratic Member



HOWARD L. BERMAN
Member of Congress



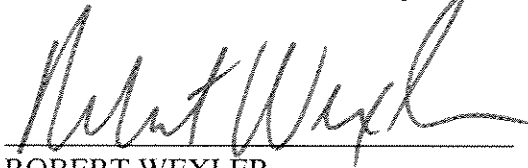
GARY L. ACKERMAN
Member of Congress



ENI F. H. FALEOMAVAEGA
Member of Congress



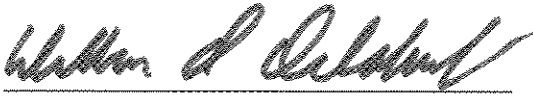
SHERROD BROWN
Member of Congress



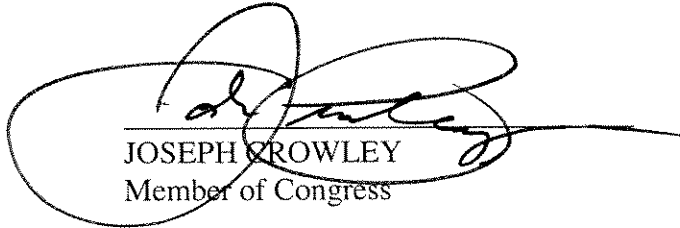
ROBERT WEXLER
Member of Congress




ELIOT L. ENGEL
Member of Congress



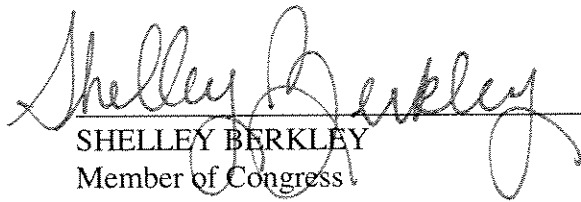
WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT
Member of Congress



JOSEPH CROWLEY
Member of Congress



EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



SHELLEY BERKLEY
Member of Congress



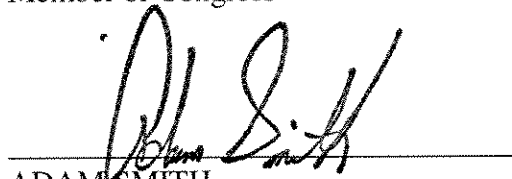
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress



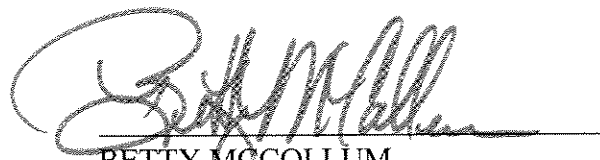
ADAM B. SCHIFF
Member of Congress




DIANE E. WATSON
Member of Congress



ADAM SMITH
Member of Congress



BETTY MCCOLLUM
Member of Congress



BEN CHANDLER
Member of Congress



RUSS CARNAHAN
Member of Congress